



**COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF AUDITOR-CONTROLLER**

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J. TYLER McCAULEY
AUDITOR-CONTROLLER

December 1, 2004

TO: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chairman
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

FROM: J. Tyler McCauley 
Auditor-Controller

SUBJECT: **SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA FOSTER FAMILY & ADOPTION AGENCY
CONTRACT REVIEW**

We have completed a contract compliance review of Southern California Foster Family & Adoption Agency (Southern California Agency or Agency), a Foster Family Agency service provider. The review was conducted as part of the Auditor-Controller's Centralized Contract Monitoring Pilot Project.

Background

The Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) contracts with Southern California Agency, a private, non-profit, community-based organization to recruit, train, and certify foster care parents for the supervision of children placed in foster care by DCFS. Once Southern California Agency places a child, it is required to monitor the placement until the child is discharged from the program.

Southern California Agency is required to hire qualified social workers to provide case management and act as a liaison between DCFS and foster parents. Southern California Agency also is responsible for training and certifying foster parents. Southern California Agency oversees a total of 47 certified foster homes in which 62 DCFS children are placed. Southern California Agency's headquarters' is located in the First District.

DCFS pays Southern California Agency a negotiated monthly rate, per child placement, established by the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Funding and Rate Bureau. Based on the child's age, Southern California Agency receives between \$1,589 and \$1,865 per month, per child. Out of these amounts, the Southern California

"To Enrich Lives Through Effective and Caring Service"

Agency pays the foster parents between \$624 and \$790 per month, per child. For Fiscal Year 2003-04, DCFS paid Southern California Agency approximately \$1.37 million.

Purpose/Methodology

The purpose of the review was to determine whether Southern California Agency was providing the services outlined in their Program Statement and County contract. We also evaluated Southern California Agency's ability to achieve planned staffing levels. Our monitoring visit included verifying whether Southern California Agency received the appropriate reimbursement rate for each child and whether the certified foster parents received their portion of the reimbursement rate in a timely manner. We reviewed certified foster parent files, children's case files, personnel files, and interviewed Southern California Agency's staff, the children and the foster parents. Our review also included visits to a sample of certified foster homes to perform home inspections.

Results of Review

Overall, Southern California Agency provided the services outlined in its County contract. The foster parents stated that the services they received from the Southern California Agency met their expectations and the children indicated that they enjoy living with their foster parents. Southern California Agency also maintained the appropriate staffing levels and their social workers maintain case loads that did not exceed the maximum allowed.

However, Southern California Agency did not re-certify one foster home annually as required, and did not maintain documentation of the physicians required monthly visits for two children receiving psychotropic medication. We recommend that Southern California Agency ensure that all foster homes are re-certified timely and that all children taking psychotropic medication are monitored monthly by the prescribing physician.

The details of our review, along with recommendations for corrective action, are attached.

Review of Report

On November 17, 2004, we discussed our report with Southern California Agency who agreed with the findings. In their attached response, Southern California Agency's management indicates the actions the agency has taken to implement the recommendations contained in the report. We also notified DCFS of the results of our review.

We thank Southern California Agency for their cooperation and assistance during this review. Please call me if you have any questions, or your staff may contact Don Chadwick at (626) 293-1102.

JTM:MMO:DC

Attachment

c: David E. Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer
Department of Children and Family Services
Dr. David Sanders, Director
Angela Carter, Deputy Director
Paul Freedlund, Deputy Director
Ed Sosa, Division Chief Quality Assurance
Sylvia Fogelman, Southern California Foster Family & Adoption Agency
Colleen Anderson, Community Care Licensing
Violet Varona-Lukens, Executive Officer
Public Information Office
Audit Committee

**CENTRALIZED CONTRACT MONITORING
FOSTER FAMILY AGENCY PROGRAM
FISCAL YEAR 2003-2004
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA FOSTER FAMILY & ADOPTION AGENCY**

PROGRAM SERVICES

Objective

To determine whether Southern California Foster Family & Adoption Agency (Southern California Agency) provided program services in accordance with their County contract and California Department of Social Services (CDSS) Title 22 Regulations. The services include training and certifying the foster parents, conducting monthly visits to the foster homes to ensure the children's needs are met and ensuring that the homes are properly maintained and providing quarterly progress reports on placements to the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) social workers.

Verification

We visited four of the 47 Los Angeles County certified foster homes that Southern California Agency billed DCFS for in April and May 2004. In addition, we interviewed and reviewed the case files for the five foster parents and the seven children placed in the four homes.

Results

Overall, Southern California Agency provided the services required by its County contract. The foster homes were well maintained, clean and in compliance with the County contract and Title 22 requirements. Southern California Agency's social workers developed thorough Needs and Services plans addressing each child's health and educational needs, and, when applicable, emancipation efforts. The social workers also visited placed children more frequently than was required by the contract and provided foster parents with support and help as needed.

Foster parents were provided with training opportunities at Southern California Agency's headquarters. The foster parents interviewed found the sessions useful and enjoyed interacting with other foster parents. Southern California Agency also provided foster parents with online training.

However, Southern California Agency did not re-certify one of four foster homes (25%) visited timely. The County contract and Title 22 require foster homes to be re-certified annually. This foster home's re-certification was due in February 2004 and was not performed until August 2004 after our review. Southern California Agency management needs to ensure that its foster homes are re-certified annually as required.

In addition, for two of five children (40%) on psychotropic medication Southern California Agency did not maintain documentation indicating that the child's physicians had performed monthly evaluations as required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. Prior to the conclusion of our review, Southern California Agency did provide documentation that follow-up visits for the above two children had occurred.

Recommendations

Southern California Agency management ensure that:

- 1. Foster homes are re-certified annually as required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations.**
- 2. Children who are on psychotropic medication are monitored by the prescribing physician monthly as required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations.**

CLIENT VERIFICATION

Objective

To determine whether the program participants actually received the services for which Southern California Agency billed DCFS.

Verification

We interviewed seven children placed in four certified foster homes and the five foster parents to confirm the services Southern California Agency billed to DCFS.

Results

The program participants interviewed stated that the services they received from Southern California Agency met their expectations. The foster parents stated that their assigned social workers were not only supportive but they were genuinely helpful as well and visited the placed children as required. The foster parents also stated that they appreciated Southern California Agency administrators who were also available to them when needed.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING/CASELOAD LEVELS**Objective**

Determine whether Southern California Agency's social workers' case loads do not exceed 15 placements and whether the supervising social worker does not supervise more than six social workers, as required by the County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations.

Verification

We interviewed the supervising social worker and five social workers and reviewed case load statistics for April and May 2004.

Results

The social workers' case loads did not exceed 15 placements and the supervising social worker did not supervise more than six social workers during April and May 2004.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

STAFFING QUALIFICATIONS**Objective**

Determine whether Southern California Agency's staff meets the education and work experience qualifications required by their County contract and CDSS Title 22 regulations. In addition, determine whether Southern California Agency conducted hiring clearances prior to hiring their staff and provided ongoing training to staff.

Verification

We interviewed Southern California Agency's Administrator, supervising social worker, and five social workers. In addition, we reviewed each staff's personnel file for documentation to confirm their education and work experience qualifications, hiring clearances and ongoing training.

Results

Southern California Agency's Administrator, supervising social worker and social workers possess the required education (college degrees) and work experience required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations. In addition, Southern California Agency's conducted hiring clearances for staff assigned to the County contract.

Recommendations

There are no recommendations for this section.

To: Supervisor Don Knabe, Chair
Supervisor Gloria Molina
Supervisor Yvonne B. Burke
Supervisor Zev Yaroslavsky
Supervisor Michael D. Antonovich

From: Sylvia Fogelman, Executive Director

**Subject: Southern California Foster Family and Adoption Agency
Contract Review**

Thank you for helping us to maintain a high quality of service to the children and families whom we serve. We were pleased to note that the families you visited in the course of the audit felt that we provided them with the services they needed and that we met their expectations. Similarly, we were pleased that the children you interviewed felt that they were in homes that worked out well for them. Certainly, that is our goal.

With regard to the recommendations, we have already implemented procedures to avert these problems in the future.

Recommendation 1: Ensure that all foster homes are re-certified on a yearly basis as required by the County contract and Title 22 regulations.

At the beginning of each month we are printing a listing of the foster homes based on recertification date allowing us the lead time to make certain that all necessary requirements are met, including a home inspection, prior to recertification.

Recommendation 2. Ensure that all children who are on psychotropic medication are monitored by the prescribing physician on a monthly basis.

Our agency had four youngsters taking psychotropic medication at the time of the audit. While we know that the foster parents follow up diligently with psychiatric appointments, unfortunately, they have not requested that the psychiatrists complete the DCFS 561 ©, the Psychological Examination form. Subsequent to the audit, we developed and distributed a procedure to reinforce the need to have these forms completed. Our agency social workers have reviewed this with the foster parents and we will maintain a Psychotropic Medication Log in the files of children on psychotropic medications to ensure that the procedure is in place.

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Executive Director
SCFEAA

VICE PRESIDENT
Lazer Cohen, MSW

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Jocelyn Tetel
Vice President, Advancement
Skirball Cultural Center

Subject: Southern California Foster Family and Adoption Agency
Contract Review

Date: November 19, 2004

Southern California Foster Family and Adoption Agency is pleased to note that overall, it is in compliance with the County contract and Title 22 regulations. We hire well qualified social workers and maintain suitable ratios of social workers to children, which allows us to work with the needs of each individual child. Our training of foster parents is continual and appropriate to the expectations we have of them in the care of the children.

Finally, the agency finds it rewarding to note that as of September 30th 36% of the children who left the agency during 2004 were adopted by their foster parents or their foster parents became their legal guardians with the long term intention to adopt; 29% returned to birth family or non related family members; and 6% emancipated. We continue to work toward reducing the number of children who must leave our agency for placements with others.

It was good to work with the staff of the Auditor-Controller on this review. They were positive in their approach while being thorough.

c: J. Tyler McCauley, Auditor-Controller
Dayid E. Janssen, CAO
Dr. David Sanders, Director DCFS
Angela Carter, Deputy Director DCFS
Paul Freedlund, Deputy Director DCFS
Ed Sosa, Division Chief Quality Assurance DCFS
Colleen Anderson, CCLD